

COMMENTARY

WASHINGTON'S "NEW PACIFISM"

Morality and the Free World's Interests

HAL LEHRMAN

THE administration's search for a policy in the Middle East, this writer was told the other day in Washington by one who helps look for it, reminded him of the ant who got tired of taking so long to travel from one place to another, and was told by an older ant to turn himself into a grasshopper if he wanted to go faster. Excellent! said the younger ant, and how do I do that? Don't ask me, said the other ant—I just give the policy guidance!

The outlines of American objectives in the current East Mediterranean crisis seemed clear and definite when stated in resolute tones by authoritative Washington sources to this correspondent late in November. These goals were seen as threefold:

WITH George Lichtheim elsewhere in this issue discussing the Mideast crisis as seen from London, and Ray Alan dealing with it from the vantage point of Cyprus, HAL LEHRMAN here rounds out COMMENTARY's coverage of the issues involved with a first-hand report of views, opinions, and policies in high places in Washington. Mr. Lehrman, author and lecturer, hardly needs introduction, having won a name for himself in recent years in COMMENTARY's pages and elsewhere as the outstanding reporter in the English language on Israeli affairs. Readers will recollect his series of articles on Israel and the Arab world following his 1955 swing around that part of the globe; they may also recall his foreshadowing, in those articles, of current developments.

1) To limit or contain Soviet penetration of the Arab world.

2) To use the occasion offered by the break-up of the old Mideast patterns through the Anglo-Franco-Israeli military action to achieve favorable and lasting settlement of the Palestine and Suez disputes.

3) To revive and repair the groggy Western alliance.

But the ways and means of attaining these ends were somewhat less precise. Indeed, it was the judgment of most onlookers that the means being used by the United States were likely to frustrate rather than promote the administration's ends, and turn tactical defeat into strategic disaster.

At a moment when swift developments are daily changing predictions into fact, it is awkward to be locked up in type for the time-lag imposed by a monthly magazine. Yet there may be merit in attempting here to analyze certain basic conflicts in Western attitudes as they emerged from talks with numerous highly placed—but necessarily anonymous—Washington observers. From these exchanges, too, came a number of significant bits of background revelation which "now can be told."

IT WAS disclosed, first, that the United States had favored the re-arming of Israel against the threat of Egypt's Soviet weapons

far more energetically than was generally supposed. Unfortunately, as so often in matters where John Foster Dulles's *grasp* of basic issues has been acute, his policy *procedures* had been inept—at least this is what was said by those who know intimately how the Secretary has operated.

By their account, Mr. Dulles suddenly perceived last April that the Israelis had been right in clamoring for modern jet planes and other heavy weapons from the West to counter the Soviet arms acquired by Nasser in his deal with the "Czechs" the previous September. Accordingly, the Department of State had begun sending out word that Israel's vulnerability offered a terrible temptation to the Arabs. The Department, while still declining to sell American arms to Israel in order to avoid irritating the Arabs, publicly stated that it had no objections to such sales by other powers. But the amount of zeal which Mr. Dulles put into urging such sales upon other countries has escaped attention. In April he notified our ambassadors in countries with arms to sell that we favored sales to Israel. In early May he announced openly that the discrepancy between Israeli and Egyptian armaments should be reduced. By mid-May and June he was working hard on the French and the Canadians to sell. The French had been responding, but Canadian reluctance was such that the Secretary had, reportedly, to make frequent appeals to Ottawa over the telephone, and complained about the lack of "a sense of responsibility" up there.

The Canadians, in fact, thought it intolerable that the U.S. should try to escape Arab resentment by coaxing others to sell planes to Israel. Insisting on shared responsibility, Canada held out for *some* sort of visible American participation, if only to the extent of such relatively inoffensive items as helicopters and half-tracks.

Late in July Mr. Dulles finally agreed to this, and announcement was imminent—when Nasser seized the Suez Canal.* Wash-

*See "What Price Israel's Defense?" by this author in COMMENTARY, September 1956.

ington wanted to proceed with the sales of arms to Israel—but without publicity. Canada demurred. The wrangle was not compromised until September. Ottawa then announced its decision to release a quantity of Sabre jets, and growled that other countries were also selling things. Two days later Washington let it be known that there was no embargo on arms to Israel and that routine U.S. shipments had already in fact been made—not very big, but bigger than under the previous administration. (This was true: under Harry Truman, Israel's army had acquired much equipment from the U.S., but virtually nothing that could shoot.)

NASSER'S Suez grab had already gone a long way toward removing most of the political resistance in Western Europe and elsewhere to Israeli arms purchases, especially in France. Thereafter Israel's problem was no longer principally where to find arms, but how to pay for them. Israel had been able to acquire arms from various sources from March on, but until Nasser's Canal seizure the only jets matching the Egyptian ones that she could get came from France, and only in a thin trickle subtracted from U.S. offshore NATO procurement orders. The secret of stepped-up deliveries after July 26, the day of the Suez grab, was well kept, but it is now possible to reveal that before the Sinai campaign Israel had received from France not twenty-four Mystères, as was widely reported, but at least sixty. With these came much larger deliveries than had been divulged of fast little AMX-13 tanks and other combat equipment.

Sinai itself eliminated whatever imbalance of military power still remained. As in 1948, Egypt again proved herself to be an excellent source of military supplies for Israel. Barring new shipments of Soviet weapons to Egypt, Israel was at last able to feel secure in the air and on the ground. If anything, official Israeli evaluation of the booty taken in Sinai (\$50 million) seemed understated. The bottled-up Egyptian army lost an estimated \$100 million worth of arms, of which scarcely \$20 million worth was de-

stroyed, the remainder being captured in usable condition. Such air superiority as Egypt still had was wiped out by Anglo-French bombing. The Israelis themselves blunted Egypt's edge in effective manpower by putting out of action better than two divisions—the "flower" of Nasser's army. The published total of Egyptian prisoners did not fully reflect the mammoth rout. The Israelis often reportedly preferred to economize on rations by encouraging surrendered troops to turn around and head for home. In some cases, the victors even supplied transportation part of the way.

WAS there collusion between the Israeli and the Anglo-French military effort? On the Israeli and French sides, the most that would be conceded was that an understanding had been reached about the Israeli half of the adventure. It was known that Paris had long been communicating to Jerusalem its intense sympathy with Israel in her effort to cope with Arab provocations, and its equally intense rancor against Nasser for his Algerian, Suez, and other mischief. There had been professedly no Israeli contact with the British in preparation for Sinai, though Jerusalem had been advised at least informally that Britain regarded Nasser as an enemy with whom it was very hard to live in peace. If any agreements existed with the British, they were only indirect—through the French—it was said.

The Israelis seemed to have been sure of a French veto in the Security Council of any condemnation of Israel as an aggressor, and of French opposition to any attempted enforcement of the old three-power guarantees for Mideast borders. There was reported evidence of French air protection available around Tel Aviv against Egyptian bombings—which did not occur. In general, too, Israel knew she could count on Anglo-French political aid against the anticipated cry of protest. She was aware that "things were going on in Cyprus, but so was everybody else." Concerning the Anglo-French "ultimatum" to Israel and Egypt the day after the Sinai invasion was launched, one

knowledgeable Israeli source put it this way: "To call it collusion would be far too much, coincidence too little."

As for the British, they continued to repeat that their ultimatum and subsequent military action were exclusively designed to protect the Canal and keep belligerent Arabs and Israelis apart. To bystanders who commented that the mass bombing of Egyptian airfields alone seemed a singular way of being impartial, the British explained that had the Egyptian air force not been put out of commission it might have gone berserk, raiding far and wide and extending the local conflict into a world war.

On the subject of collusion, high American sources declared themselves to be in possession of sufficient (undisclosed) evidence actually to establish a timetable for the "conspiracy." According to this timetable, France had begun shipping arms in quantity to Israel in August. (This had been confirmed by other sources, as noted above.) On October 13—the day the Security Council voted the principles according to which a Suez settlement was to be negotiated—France and Israel allegedly agreed on synchronized military operations. Three days later, when Eden and Lloyd visited Paris, Britain decided to go along with France. It was from that day, October 16, that the Americans later dated "the blackout of frank Anglo-French consultations with us." French Premier Mollet had told his cabinet that week that the Suez question was far from settled, that action was imminent, and that there was a diplomatic secret to be kept even from the French cabinet itself.

D-day for Sinai was set with a view to the disorders in Hungary. Israel, reportedly, would have preferred to wait another month until the onset of the winter rains, which would have impeded Egyptian regrouping against an Israeli offensive. But France was described as insistent on taking advantage of Soviet distractions in satellite Eastern Europe.

Washington knew nothing of this when Israel began mobilizing towards the last week of October. Suspicion of collusion was

first aroused by an American military attaché's impression in Tel Aviv that his British and French colleagues knew more about the mobilization than he did. Normally, all three observers shared their data freely; this time the others "clammed up" on the American.

By October 24, Washington knew something was in the wind. By Saturday, October 27, U.S. Ambassador Lawson was cabling alarm. This led to Eisenhower's appeals to Ben Gurion to keep the peace. Sunday brought discovery of the French arms shipments. "The French," a Washington informant told me dryly last month, "were going through the act of asking our authorization for offshore deliveries to the Israelis—but they were shipping without telling us. Some of the planes arrived still showing NATO markings, which were effaced at the Israeli airfields." Monday, the Israeli columns entered Sinai.

Their attack made good military sense, Washington observers said, as being intended to wipe out the *fedayeen* bases designated in the first Israeli communiqué as the objective. But the same communiqué also spoke of engaging the Egyptians *in the direction of the Suez Canal*—an apparent slip indicating collusion with the British and French. Israel, according to the American interpretation, was supposed to have five days in which to reach Suez—and thus provide London and Paris with the pretext for rushing to the Canal's rescue. But Eden waited only one day before issuing an ultimatum—when the main Israeli forces were still sixty miles from the Canal—calling on both sides to withdraw ten miles from the waterway. This made no sense, and could be explained only by the rapid rush of concurrent diplomatic developments, American sources contended. The British and French ambassadors had been summoned to the State Department and urged to procure their governments' consent to tripartite anti-Israeli action in the Security Council. When they failed to produce approval by London and Paris within the next morning's deadline, the United States acted alone and offered a

strong anti-Israeli resolution at the UN that very afternoon. This swift American action forced the Anglo-French hand, so Washington says, and brought the premature ultimatum—all of which exposed the collusion.

WHITE HOUSE wrath spilled over against Israel because Ben Gurion had "oversold" Eisenhower on his renunciation of preventive war, and against Britain and France because they had failed to consult their major ally before committing an act of force which seemed to jeopardize the United States as much as themselves. But, in the Anglo-French view, neither had ever hidden the conviction from the President or Dulles that appeasement of Nasser would be as futile as appeasement of Hitler, and that they would ultimately have to fight the Egyptian dictator if the price of passivity was to be another Munich. Further, consultation with Washington before moving against Cairo would only have brought another veto from Dulles.

The Israelis, for their part, contended that three major developments had nullified Israel's previous declarations against a preventive war: (1) Nasser's victory in nationalizing the Suez Canal; (2) Jordan's incorporation into the Egyptian-led encirclement of Israel; (3) evidence of a massive new *fedayeen* offensive in preparation.

Israel had hoped that Nasser's seizure of Suez would induce the West to force a showdown with him. Instead, she saw the West, pushed by American diplomacy, in retreat before him. American intentions had been good: to break Nasser's resistance by economic and diplomatic pressures instead of by force. But the results had been disastrous because Nasser was clearly surviving the pressure and growing mightier in prestige with every passing day. The maritime community was becoming increasingly obsequious, its "Users' Association" degenerating into a mere apparatus for collecting Canal dues for Nasser. Having defied the entire world with impunity, he could now foresee the easy destruction of little Israel.

The first omen had been the election, in

early October, of a Jordanian parliament unequivocally dedicated to Israel's destruction. This, according to the Israelis, removed the last restraining influence of Egypt's rival, Iraq, upon Jordan, and put the latter solidly within Nasser's sphere of influence. Nasser promptly moved to form an Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian military alliance, which was signed in Amman several days later. This done, the three chiefs of staff in the Jordanian capital proceeded to plan a three-way *fedayeen* assault on Israel.

Even before this, Nasser had succeeded in establishing an underground *fedayeen* network in all the states bordering on Israel, including Lebanon. Egyptian officers, accredited as military attachés, held command posts in all the raider bands. The *fedayeen* could operate independently of national policy in any Arab state. (As many as one thousand separate *fedayeen* assault groups were available, according to documentary evidence which the Israelis claim to have seized in Gaza.) Some of the incursions from Jordan earlier this year were known by Israeli intelligence to have been Egyptian-led, but no retaliatory action was taken against Egypt for fear of irritating world opinion at that time.

Nasser had suspended all *fedayeen* operations from his side of the Israeli border when he grabbed the Suez Canal; attacks had come only from the side of Israel's other neighbors. Now, confident of Suez victory, Nasser was again turning to direct assault. Inclusion of Jordan in his system of alliances, according to the Israelis, cleared the way. Intelligence reports were said to have disclosed a step-up in *fedayeen* training and intense activity in Sinai (later confirmed by Israeli capture of heavy offensive equipment, including tank-repair depots and vast fuel dumps, close to the Israeli line).

According to the Israelis, subsequent events fully justified their warning formally given the State Department, on Saturday, October 27, that a new Egyptian *fedayeen* campaign was imminent. On Sunday, three *fedayeen* attacks were launched from Egyptian territory—the first such attacks in three

months. On Monday, the Israeli offensive started. On its second and third day there were spasmodic *fedayeen* attempts at retaliation; these were not reported to the Israeli public to avoid public disquiet. As the Israeli columns swung back toward Gaza, the *fedayeen* bands fled from that area across the Negev—good "bandit country"—toward Jordan. An estimated five hundred raiders made their escape in this way, doing what damage they could en route.

But the *fedayeen* threat, the Israelis maintain, is now removed only on the Egyptian side. On all other frontiers the *fedayeen* squads remain intact, capable of acting without the knowledge of the local Arab governments, and even in defiance of them—ready to embroil their relations with Israel at a signal from Cairo.

THE sluggish performance of the Anglo-French in Suez, contrasting with the dashing Israeli campaign, was seen by many as proof positive that no prior consultations with the Israelis, on a military level at least, could have taken place. I found no Washington military expert who was not baffled by the "bad show" put on by the British and French. They moved as cautiously as if they had had Rommel's Afrika Korps in front of them, not Nasser's Egyptians.

If the waste of precious days before the landing at Port Said was due to home political considerations, to a desire to keep casualties low, it was a monumental miscalculation of where the real political risk lay. The British and French badly overestimated the power of their veto in the Security Council, and grossly underestimated the deterrent power of international pressure. They thought the veto gave them two weeks or more in which to do the military job unimpeded; they never dreamed, apparently, that the United States would react so vigorously, or that the General Assembly would move at all—and they entirely overlooked the possibility of intervention from Moscow despite Budapest and Warsaw.

The result was that their assault was brought to an ignominious halt, when a few

more days might have accomplished its prime objectives: liberation of the Canal and the downfall of Nasser. In retrospect, it became evident that both goals might have been achieved if the French and British had stayed out and simply given Israel assurances that she could take action against Nasser without being impeded by the old international guarantees of Egypt's frontiers.*

How decisive were Bulganin's notes threatening the British and French with Russian rocket weapons? Washington took the notes seriously enough to keep the lights blazing in all-night conferences. Disposed to condemn the Anglo-French adventure as a provocation against the U.S., the Eisenhower administration was quite prepared to believe that Moscow would be at least equally furious at the prospect of losing all the advantages it had gained in the Middle East since the arms deal with Nasser. The Russians, it was feared, had good reasons to throw their weight around; it enabled them to distract attention from the butchery in Hungary, capitalize on the Anglo-French decline in international esteem, and pose as champions of the UN—all in one.

The British and French were now declaring that their cease-fire's following hard on the Soviet warning was accidental rather than consequential. British quarters recalled that Eden from the start had described the invasion as "temporary" and had left room for the UN to take over. Further, London had embraced the principle of a UN police force from the moment Canada's Lester Pearson first proposed it. The French were saying that the British were less able than they to resist the psychological pressure from Moscow, and compared the division in the House of Commons with the solidarity of the French parliament. But how, asked the French, could we go on without the British?

Nevertheless, it was clear the Russian move had counted heavily in the Anglo-French retreat. It had been accompanied

by terrifying reports of Soviet airlifts over Turkey and arms deliveries to Syria. Word had gone around of Soviet assurances to the Arabs that, if they would hold out just one week, help would come. And probably the greatest persuader of all, in the opinion of uninvolved West European onlookers, was the spectacle of the U.S. and the USSR lined up against America's partners in the Western alliance and against Israel—"the crowning achievement," one aghast ambassador called it, "of the New Co-Existence."

Among the Israelis, there was no inclination to deny that the Soviet blast "made us shake in our shoes." But they had not accepted the cease-fire and agreed to quit Sinai because of *that*. They were not surprised by the animosity toward the Jewish state shown by a "Ukrainian pogromist" like Nikita Khrushchev. ("We have checked the report and found it true: Khrushchev, *did* say in Warsaw, during the first trouble over Gomułka, that 'American imperialists and Zionists' were to blame.") Having destroyed the chief immediate threat, the vanguard of the Egyptian army, the Israelis may have considered that holding the Sinai Desert was not worth the risk of Russian attack. But the overriding consideration in their agreement to withdrawal was that, on top of all this pressure, they could feel the weight of American anger.

Eisenhower, it was known, had sent strong messages, written and oral, to Ben Gurion after the Bulganin threats. Ambassador Lawson had talked very bluntly. Israel's existence was important to the U.S., the messages intimated, but the UN's existence was more important. Unless Israel yielded, the U.S. would feel compelled to vote for all UN sanctions against her, no matter how severe, perhaps even expulsion from the world community. ("About the only thing not mentioned was the arrest of Abba Eban.")

Not even the threat of such punishment was decisive, however. What brought capitulation was simply the unthinkable possibility that Israel might be cut off from her stoutest resource and best friend, the

*See "Western Self-Interest and Israeli Self-Defense" by this writer in the May 1956 number.

American people. During the awful hours of the Soviet-induced panic, Ben Gurion reportedly spoke by telephone with the Israeli embassy in Washington no less than eleven times. Not UN sanctions, not Soviet terror, but the dread of irremediable estrangement from the U.S., was said finally to have brought him to surrender.

HAVING yielded on a cease-fire and eventual withdrawal from Sinai, would Israel also give up Gaza and the Aqaba Gulf islands? Massive pressure or unanticipated events may conceivably force her out. But, as of late November, all signs pointed to an adamant stand against withdrawal from these points as long as possible.

To the Israelis, any UN attempt to put the Egyptians back in Gaza and the islands would seem treachery compounded by folly. Both areas had been festering boils on the body of Arab-Israeli relations. Gaza had been a nest of raiders, the islands a knife at the throat of Israel's shipping. Israeli sentiment seemed especially firm on Gaza. "I do not think," one Israeli spokesman told me, "that the Egyptians will ever return to Gaza without another war. That's how they came there in the first place." World opinion, as reflected in the very resolutions of the General Assembly which were regulating the present efforts for peace, had rejected any re-establishment of the previous impossible situation.

It was too early for administration views in Washington to have hardened on Gaza ("We're playing everything by ear"), but an unofficial disposition was visible not to quarrel about Israel's retaining Gaza in any final settlement, provided the Arabs there were redistributed through the country. Asked how Israel could do so without gravely endangering her security, the reply was: the Gaza Strip has nearly 300,000 Arabs on a "sand dune" twenty-five miles long and five miles wide which has virtually nothing local to eat except fish; over 200,000 of them have been supported by a UN relief agency, which can't be expected to do so forever; another 60,000 have been maintained by Egypt; the only sensible way for Israel to

meet the burden would be by transferring the Arabs to the interior, where they might begin earning a living.

A possible solution of the Aqaba problem, it was intimated in American quarters, would be the permanent demilitarization of the islands, with UN inspection and guarantee. The port of Elath itself was seen as of only minor importance to Israel, in any case. It was too small to handle big ships, and its climate was so dreadful that people had to be lured by income-tax exemptions to live there. Once Suez was opened to Israeli shipping, Elath would die on the vine.

OBVIOUSLY, however, such an opening of the Canal presupposed a determined U.S. policy of settling this and other difficult Mideastern issues. Did such a policy exist, and how was it to function? To this, the authoritative American answer at the time of writing—privately expressed—seemed to be as follows.

The U.S. emphatically wants final settlements to emerge from the present turmoil. We do not want to let the situation slip back to where it was. All our spokesmen, from the President and Mr. Dulles down, have reiterated this firmly. In fact, we have offered resolutions to the General Assembly for the creation of committees specifically empowered to deal with the Palestine and Suez issues. These committees would be only a beginning; we expect to urge other measures as events develop. Nor do we hold any brief for Nasser or nurse any enthusiasm for him. We consider him a dangerous source of unrest for the whole Middle East.

But force is not the way to bring Nasser to book, the American exposition continued. We had been making progress in the Arab world *against* Nasser. The oil-producing countries were getting tired of his frenzied policies, to which he was committing them without consultation and against their interests. King Saud was worrying about Egypt's propaganda interference inside his feudal realm. Christian Lebanon was troubled by the dangers of Islamic passions being fanned by Nasser's super-na-

tionalism. Hashemite Iraq and Jordan were uneasy at Nasser's imperialist ambitions and his flirtation with Russia. Even inside Egypt, the Western-educated elements were beginning to be pretty sick of their dictator, his personality, and his pro-Kremlin orientation. Meanwhile, economic pressure against him was increasing. Capital investment in Egypt had slumped. Business there was at a standstill. The Soviets were dumping Egyptian cotton. All this seemed likely to force the Colonel to come to reason.

But then came the military attack on Egypt—so ran the argument—which spoiled everything by leaving anti-Nasser Egyptians and all the Arab governments no choice but to side with him against the "imperialists" and "colonialists."

How can we repair the damage? World opinion sees now that it was wrong to let the Palestine and Suez crises drift. There is a new determination in the General Assembly this time to wring out settlements and stamp them with permanent guarantees. But there is an equal determination not to condone aggression. Therefore, the first thing to do is to eliminate the effects of aggression. How else do we convince the Arabs and Asia that peaceful settlements should follow? The Emergency Force, moreover, is not an instrument of the U.S. and her allies. It must have sovereign Egypt's consent to the terms for its entry. It is up to the UN and its Secretary General—not up to us—to find such terms.

Once the *status quo ante* has been restored, then it will be time enough to concentrate on long-range settlements. We envisage that plans for such settlements will be proposed and debated within the UN. The results of these deliberations would then be conveyed to the disputants, with a directive that they negotiate and bargain on details within the framework of the general decision—and reach an agreement. We stand by to help the peace succeed through major programs of economic aid—among them loans to Israel for compensation to resettled Palestine refugees; the Jordan Valley water plan for Syria, Jordan, and Israel; and even pos-

sibly the controversial Aswan Dam for Egypt, which we once rejected.

Would Nasser be difficult? We do not expect so. He has squandered his material resources and his reputation in fruitless military posturing. The Canal is blocked, and useless to him. Economically, he is almost bankrupt. He knows how near he was to destruction, and how close to falling under Soviet control. He'll be more reasonable from now on. If not—if he stands out against a settlement when all other litigants and the international community desire one—then he will only isolate and discredit himself. Everybody knows he was saved by the U.S. and the UN. If he gets "tough" again, he'll only hang himself.

Israel needs peace, not territory. The maritime world wants a free Suez waterway, not conquests. Until now, every side has approached a settlement intemperately. This method has failed. The only alternative is settlements imposed by the conscience of the international community. In full awareness of the implications, our government has taken a position based on moral principle. We must not jeopardize that position. The UN itself is at stake.

THUS, informally, went the new American idealism. Paradoxically, the realists most likely to assail this idealistic view lacked the realistic strength to back up their convictions. The U.S., the idealist, held all the power. Israel clearly could do little except try to persuade. The prestige of Britain and France had shrunk vastly after their Suez failure. In the light of their apparently frightened retreat before the Soviets, the dominant new fact was that the two European NATO powers could no longer pursue a policy in the Middle East independent of their American partner. Henceforth the latter's support was essential in confronting the Russians there. Indeed, the most pressing Anglo-French task now appeared to be the reconstruction of the Western alliance—which, French Foreign Minister Pineau was pathetically conceding, "is our only safeguard against sharing the fate of Hungary."

But this did not mean that the British and French had abandoned hope of persuading the U.S. to adopt an *effective* three-power policy in the Middle East, especially since they regarded the true American interest as identical with their own and that of the rest of the free world; they—and others as well, including important American observers—found much to alarm them in the administration's view as outlined above.

ACCORDING to these critics, the U.S. was wrong in her estimate of the chief elements in the present crisis: the UN, the Arabs, Nasser, the Russians—and even the capacity of the U.S. herself to achieve a solution.

The UN, first of all, was not the above-the-battle moral arbiter which the U.S. supposed it to be. Its members voted in terms of their individual interests, not out of corporate altruism. The Soviet veto, it was pointed out, would frustrate the rule of reason in the Security Council. And the combination of Soviet satellites with the Arab and the Asian blocs would prevent the two-thirds majority needed in the General Assembly.

How long, moreover, was American policy-making entitled to go on erring monumentally in its Arab appraisals? Ambassador Henry Byroade had persuaded the State Department that the Czech arms deal with Egypt was a one-time transaction which would not bring Soviet agents in. The absurdity of this assurance had been revealed by the discovery of Soviet arms in Egypt in a quantity and of a quality far beyond all reports—and beyond the capacity of the Egyptians to use. Up to the last moment, the State Department had believed that Nasser was a capable military leader who stood at the head of a formidable coalition of Arab states. But now, under Israeli attack, Nasser's elite divisions had crumbled, many of his officers had fled, his troops had shown little stomach for fighting—and not a single "loyal" ally had come to his aid. Where then was the vaunted Arab solidarity? Even the rabidly pro-Nasser premier of Jordan, Suleiman Nabulsi, recently elected on a do-or-die program to

throw out the British and annihilate Israel, had balked. When Nasser appealed for help, Nabulsi had gone for advice to—of all people!—the British ambassador to Jordan. The latter had advised him to ask Nasser what help Egypt could provide the Jordanians were the Israelis to attack them, too. Nasser, according to reliable accounts, was by then too busy to reply.

No, said the critics, the fact was that Nasser's regime would have caved in if hostilities against him had continued another forty-eight hours. And few would have rejoiced more than his Arab colleagues. With the exception of the Syrians, who were now being led by a clique of young officers devoted to Nasser and Moscow, all the Arab states were fed up with the Egyptian dictator, for the reasons already noted—and because the hot breath of the Kremlin was blowing down their necks.

But what were the Arabs, and the other peoples in Nasser's orbit, to think now? First they saw the British, French, and Israelis cease fire. Then they saw Nasser actually beginning to dictate the terms of their withdrawal. Worst of all, they saw Moscow and Washington anxiously engaged in re-establishing him on his clay feet again! For a country like Ethiopia, which, like other small states in the area, had reason to resent Nasser's imperialist meddling, the spectacle was troubling. In the days when Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld was pleading with Nasser to be reasonable about the Emergency Force, the Ethiopian delegate was overheard to ask perplexedly: "Was he beaten or wasn't he?"

Nasser himself lost no time in cooperating in his own rehabilitation. Already he and his "heroic" chief of staff, General Abdul Hakim Amer, were delivering ringing speeches on the theme of the Egyptians having driven the Israelis before them until the British and French, sneaking upon them from behind, had stabbed Egypt in the back; the Egyptian air force had *not* been destroyed—the enemy had bombed wooden dummies craftily distributed on the airstrips, and so forth. (Israeli Major General Moshe Dayan

has conceded that, without the Anglo-French intervention, the Israeli clean-up of Sinai and Gaza would have taken, not four days, but five to seven.) A far less humiliating defeat at Israeli hands had cost King Farouk his throne. But the Egyptian people, shielded from the truth about this second disaster, would soon begin believing the Nasser version—and he would emerge bigger than ever and harder to dislodge. The Arab states would have to accept it too—didn't Nasser have the support of the Russians and the Americans?—and fear him all the more for having failed him while the actual shooting was going on.

WAS it true, moreover—the critics asked—that the U.S. had to cling so steadfastly to a policy of moral exhortation and high-mindedness? She was not above using realistic pressure against her own friends. Consider, for instance, the calculating way she was withholding oil from fuel-hungry Western Europe in order to compel Anglo-French tractability on troop withdrawal. Why could she not use some of this tough-minded firmness against the other side? The U.S. now enjoyed great prestige with the Arabs because of her stand against the Anglo-French and Israeli invasions. Even Nasser, to curry favor with his own subjects, found it necessary to boast of his American support. Why should not this influence be used, for once, to press for a measure of Egyptian tractability?

The immediate issues, at the moment of writing, were the Emergency Force, withdrawal of the belligerent armies, and the clearing of the Canal. "Marshal Dag"—it was argued—enjoyed considerable leeway in interpreting his General Assembly mandate. But Hammarskjöld was, after all, subject to advice and influence from UN members. The U.S. was not the least considerable among those. Why should she not take a firm position and urge positive views upon him? What purpose did it serve to help Nasser regain all his old vantage-points? Did anything in his record suggest he would be grateful and conciliatory thereafter?

Replacement of Anglo-French troops by a toothless international force before the Canal had been cleared, it was stressed, would enable Nasser to delay repairs until he got his own terms. On the other hand, an Emergency Force with *real* authority, acting as a constabulary army to keep the peace on Egyptian soil until a settlement was reached, would keep Nasser's prestige deflated and spur him into negotiating; the quicker he wanted the UN force out, the quicker he would have to settle. But if General Edson Burns merely changed his hat from commander of a weary Truce Observation Corps to commander of an Emergency Force subject to Nasser's whims, then the sole result might be another decade of ambush and murder on Israel's borders, and a Canal that stayed under Egypt's capricious control. Already there were ominous signs—especially in Iraq—that Arab mobs, intoxicated by Western retreat, were beginning to push their governments toward a new extremism dictated by the street.

As a minimum, it was urged, the U.S. should proclaim unmistakably that her support of UN principles, and her opposition to unilateral force, did not mean support of Nasser. Better, her influence in the establishment of Suez-Sinai arrangements should be exerted to favor procedures that would hold Nasser in check without ratifying the results of the invasions. Best of all, some recommended, the U.S. should initiate diplomatic talks concurrent with the efforts she would be making in the UN, where progress toward a Middle East solution faced the Russian veto and the Afro-Asian and Soviet voting blocs. All parties should be called to a conference in Washington to seek a peace which then would be offered, with all the force and prestige of an agreement already arrived at, to the UN for approval and guarantees. Could such an agreement be secured? Not if every point of actual vantage had already been surrendered in the area itself. But if made part of a consistent policy of firmness, it had a chance.

There was, moreover, the danger that dilatoriness would only give the Russians

the chance to make more trouble. With an Emergency Force in effective control, Moscow would have no pretext for meddling. The swifter the progress toward final settlements, the less danger that the USSR might offer her own special kind of "settlements." The Israelis in particular feared that meanwhile, because of the protective American attitude toward Egypt, and Soviet hostility toward Israel, the Syrians and Jordanians might be encouraged to attempt large-scale damage on Israel's borders. This time, with the Sinai campaign as a precedent, small retaliatory raids would no longer suffice, it was feared. The Israelis would be compelled to hit back massively—and then the fat would be in the Soviet fire again.

IN ADMINISTRATION circles in Washington, no real alarm could be detected over the size and quality of Soviet arms depots in Egypt. "After all," one was advised with a shrug, "Eden has to make it sound frightening. He's fighting for his political life."

Less complacency prevailed in connection with the Soviet warnings which had followed the cease-fire, and with the abortive "recruiting" of Russian and Chinese "volunteers." But the temper in Washington was more angry than anxious over these threats. Officials on a policy-making level seemed inclined to dismiss them as a cheap attempt to curry favor with the Arabs by pretending readiness to rescue the Egyptians after the invasions had been halted and the crisis brought under UN control.

Certainly, the arrival of Communist troops would be a very grave development. But the whole thing was really a "huge bluff." How could those 250,000 Chinese "volunteers" ever get to the Middle East? How, in fact, could any sizable amount of Russians get there? Hadn't the Syrian Khalid Bakdash, the Number One Arab Communist, announced months ago on his return from Moscow that there would be no "volunteers," since the Arab states had enough fighting men of their own? One was invited to note how artificially the scare about the "volunteers" had been built up—and then

laid to rest. For days the whole Soviet press had been filled with virtually nothing else. Then, overnight, the story had vanished from Russian newspapers.

Admittedly, it had been necessary to warn Moscow that shipment of Communist fighting men into the Middle East would have serious consequences. This the President and Acting Secretary of State Herbert Hoover, Jr., had done on several solemn occasions. But the warnings had been rightly delivered within the UN framework, not by the brandishing of American armed power. For several good reasons, it was explained, this government could and would make no unilateral threats of the "Formosa" variety.

First, we lacked an airtight command of the approaches to the Arab zone comparable to our dominant positions off the Chinese mainland. We did not have comparably secure bases of operation. Nor did we enjoy in the Arab world the total support of regime and people which we had in Nationalist China. On the contrary, appointing ourselves the shield of the Middle East might easily, and rightly, incur the Arabs' enmity for having selected their territory as a potential battleground.

Second, we would have to assume a virtual protectorate over the area to make our guardianship really stick. This would involve us in all the tortured rivalries of the Middle East, the dynastic hatreds, and the Arab-Israeli feud. We would lose our role as arbitrator, and with it all hopes of restoring the Middle East to tranquillity.

Third, and immeasurably most important, we would deal a brutal, perhaps mortal, blow to the UN. Never lose sight of the fact—one was admonished—that the world was in an atomic stalemate. There was also a geographic stalemate in Europe. The balance would be tipped only in the contest for the great uncommitted part of the world—Africa and Asia. In an earlier day, a great power would have settled the matter with gunboat diplomacy, but now a small application of force could set off a world explosion. This left moral force the only remaining instrument. And here again, the

UN was the only medium we had for imposing a moral settlement.

We had therefore chosen to stand against the Soviets—and against unilateral violence—inside the UN. For the first time in history a great power—the U.S.—in the person of President Eisenhower, with a hydrogen bomb in each pocket, had taken an absolute position in favor of peace. As a result, our prestige had never been higher. Our example was appreciated. We hoped it would be imitated. And if we ever came to grips with the Russians, we wanted as many peoples of the world as we could get on our side.

ALL over Washington, under many flags and in many of our own government offices, this “new pacifism” on the part of the Eisenhower administration was creating consternation and worse. The group in the Department of State whose advice the President now seemed to be taking—or adapting to his own personal philosophy—had to contend with a loyal dissenting minority. The Central Intelligence Agency was known to be substantially more disturbed than the State Department by the Soviet power threat to the Middle East. At the Pentagon the attitude was still stronger—much closer to the iron-hard position of General Alfred Gruenther, NATO’s retiring Chief of Staff, than to that of his predecessor, General Eisenhower.

To the alarmed critics, the doctrine of no salvation except through the UN betrayed a total misconception of the nature of that organization—and of the Russians. It presupposed, they said, a level of morality and disinterestedness which simply did not exist among the nations on the UN roster. Most of all, it credited the Russians with a capacity for principled behavior vastly beyond them. Was it not the truth, instead, that Moscow was totally indifferent to the UN except as a platform from which to broadcast propaganda and spread confusion? Was any further proof needed, *after* Hungary, that the Kremlin operated essentially from a base of power whenever it knew that force would go unchallenged?

The question, the rebuttal maintained, was not of risking world war but of finding ways to avoid it. After losing Eastern Europe through appeasement of Stalin, we had seemed to have learned that it was necessary to draw in advance each line over which the Russians must not step without having to reckon with us. (Failure to do so with the Kaiser and Hitler had led us into two world wars.) Our ultimatum to Moscow had forced the Soviets out of Iran. Our commitments to Greece and Turkey and our airlift to Berlin had stopped the Russians’ westward push. We had inadvertently given them the impression we would not fight for Korea, but our instantaneous response to Communist aggression there had at least stayed Moscow’s hand. In Indo-China we had forgotten the lesson, and the Communist empire had advanced. But Secretary Dulles nevertheless understood the nature of the Russians. He even went beyond the doctrine of “containment” to the more risky one of “liberation”—at least in rhetoric. It was Dulles, in fact, who gave the policy of “security through firmness” its firmest expression, in the doctrine of “brinkmanship.” And yet, suddenly, the free world found itself in November led by a country, still the most powerful in history, whose Chief Executive had reversed its course and appeared to have forgotten all that had ever been learned about the ways and procedures of the totalitarian enemy.

THE butchery of the Hungarians might have justified a retaliation based upon that “moral force” of which Washington spoke so piously. Since the UN’s creation, had there ever been an act calling more insistently, as a matter of moral principle, for denunciation, condemnation, and punishment than the Soviet crime in Hungary? What bold counter-action would have been too extreme? Could not the UN, at the very least, have placed the Kremlin in quarantine and declared the Soviet Union to be in total economic and diplomatic isolation from the civilized world? Could not the U.S., to express the UN’s indignation as well as im-

plement the administration's campaign slogan of "liberation" for captive peoples, have warned Russia from the UN rostrum to cease and desist? Could not the U.S., at least within the UN Charter and with complete treaty legality, have reinforced her troop garrisons in the territory of her NATO allies as a caution to the Russians?

The UN and the U.S., however, did nothing of the kind. They knew that hardly anything short of war could make the Russians desist in Hungary. They knew that, for Moscow, Eastern Europe had become a prime, indispensable position—an old-fashioned "sphere of influence" from which retreat meant disaster. To challenge this claim, especially at a moment when the Soviets were already knee-deep in Hungarian blood, would have brought war. Knowing this, neither the "international conscience" nor the proponents of the new Washington doctrine of international morality dared to offer such a challenge. The Russians knew we could not even risk a bluff. But they knew they could bluff us in the Middle East, and even come very close to challenging us. And we let them.

The men of the Kremlin respect a clear expression of firmness and strength, but read hesitation as weakness and moderation as fear. To them, our announcements that Soviet armed intervention in the Middle East would be "opposed" by us within the UN suggested only that we would not act outside the UN. This, for the Russians, was as good as proclaiming that we were prepared to do nothing. What, in the last analysis, could the UN do, especially if each further Soviet step into the Middle East were carefully prepared so as to look like a gesture of good will and assistance toward the Arabs? The Russians were probably wrong in concluding that the Middle East meant less to us than Eastern Europe meant to them. In the end, if necessary, we would fight for it, and outside the UN. But we were not making this clear to the Russians. And because we weren't, we were not staving off world war but bringing it closer.

For the Middle East was a rich prize, and

the Russians clearly coveted it. The progress they had made lately, while the West stood by wringing its hands, was enormous. In recent weeks they had been able to pose as the champion of Islam (at least the Arabs were convinced), to threaten to send an expeditionary army, to instruct the UN Emergency Force where to march, to demand reparations for Egypt from the three "aggressors" (without offering reparations for Budapest) even before Egypt herself thought of demanding them, and to threaten Israel with extinction. Daily they were winning more allies in the Middle East by an apparent readiness to take risks for them, while we were losing allies by our reluctance to do the same. Actually, the Soviets saw their risks as negligible or nil, since we had never indicated—at least not unequivocally enough for Moscow to understand them—the limits of our endurance. And should American leadership remain paralyzed by its "new morality" and its doctrine of "atomic stalemate," further aggressive moves by Moscow were to be expected in the Middle East: an arms build-up in Syria, a Kurdish "rebellion," troubles fomented from Azerbaijan, the beginnings of a squeeze on Turkey.

IN RETROSPECT, critics of American policy said, it was now evident that we might have blocked all the Soviet gains in the Middle East if, in September of 1955, we and our allies had notified Nasser that we would not tolerate his transformation of Egypt into a Red arsenal. And there was no mystery as to how the "volunteers" could reach the battlefield if Moscow so desired. Satellite Bulgaria, just a quick jump across the unguarded Greek islands, could be converted overnight into a troop-transport air base. But the "volunteers" would not be sent if we made it clear that we would regard them as troops—and use force against them and the regime that sent them.

This would have to be communicated to the Arabs as well as the Russians. But even without "volunteers," Moscow could delay a Middle Eastern settlement by stiffening

Nasser's back with promises to him and threats to others. This meant we would have to serve notice on Moscow—so sharply as to leave no doubt—that we regarded the Middle East as vital to the free world; that we would resist not only “volunteers,” but also fresh armaments and even Communist coups; and that we would resist outside as well as inside the UN. By its omission of Israel and inclusion of Iraq and Pakistan (two states hostile to Israel) the American warning to keep hands off the Baghdad Pact countries actually could be read by Moscow as an admission of U.S. indifference to the fate of the Jewish state. We would specifically have to warn the Russians that Israel's preservation was a vital part of the free world's Middle Eastern policy, and something we would surely fight for. If, through the Syrians or by any other device, Israel were to be attacked and destroyed, the destruction of all other U.S. positions in the Middle East—and thereafter in Europe—would not be far behind. (Israel herself, many felt, should talk back more forthrightly than she so far had to a bully who, after all, had spoken bluntly of her annihilation.)

We were, in any case, not so unprepared in the Middle East as the faint of heart supposed. We had Turkey, Greece, and all of Western Europe. We had friends even among the Arabs. We had the Sixth Fleet. An expressed readiness to use it would be our best guarantee that we would not need to. And we even had behind us the people, and perhaps also substantial parts of the armies, of Russia's satellites in Europe.

Was this not, observers of the Soviet scene maintained, the worst possible time for the Russians to court the risk of

war, and was not the Middle East the worst possible place for them to fight one? Indeed, had they ever before permitted the democracies to set the time and place for any test? Was it not an established technique of the Soviets to move against us only when *they* were ready and only where they chose? If they *wanted* war with us now, would they not find ways to precipitate it under circumstances more favorable to themselves? Would they not select as battleground a Korea, an Indo-China, a Berlin, some point on the periphery of their land mass, preferably where they might recruit others to fight for them, rather than issue the challenge in the remote, logistically disadvantageous Middle East? Would they, moreover, pick a fight where they would have to rely for a base on the convulsed and rebellious hinterland of Eastern Europe?

It was improbable that the Soviet empire would ever again attain the strength it enjoyed the day that Khrushchev opened his campaign to downgrade Stalin. That monumental change of line lifted the lid of a Pandora's box whose contents may yet bring the whole Soviet monolith crashing down. The Hungarians could be crushed, and even the Poles tricked and eventually crushed as well—but only temporarily. The slave world had demonstrated that Communist tyranny bore within its system the seeds of its own downfall.

We ourselves, however, could still do much to put off that downfall by granting Moscow easy victories out of misguided idealism, and by retreating before its ever emptier threats. We could speed the downfall only by making plain to the Kremlin that there would be no more easy victories.